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THE BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR.

BY SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, GAIL HAMILTON, AGNES REPPLIER,
AMELIA E. BARR, THE REV. DR. CHARLES A. BRIGGS,
JULIEN GORDON, AND DR. WILLIAM A. HAMMOND.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD:

YOU have done me the honor to invite me to mention which is the most remarkable book I happen to have read during the past year, and to give my reasons for the choice, as well as some account of the particular book.

Ordinarily this would be rather difficult, for I am a varied and omnivorous reader, and should be puzzled in most years to pick out the special work which had made the most impression upon me. But now it chances to be an easy answer which I shall make. I brought on board the "City of New York," when starting for this country, four volumes to beguile the brief voyage. These were a pocket copy of the Greek "Odyssey," a Russian grammar, a Japanese fairy-story book, and "La Bête Humaine," by Émile Zola. Beyond doubt it is the last mentioned which has most forcibly impressed itself upon me of late, and which I shall associate always with that wild and wintry voyage across the Atlantic.

I take it that anybody who pretends to keep at all abreast of modern literature must read, and does read, whatever Zola writes. I myself have certainly gone through every word of his writing : some of it with disgust, much of it with deep pain, and much of it, from the point of view of literary art, with profound admira-

tion. There can be no question but he is one of the greatest masters of fiction in past or present times, and will stand forth in times to come the chief representative of the realistic school of novels. With how subtle a skill, for example, does he not open the grim and dismal story of "*La Bête Humaine*" ? Before two or three pages are perused we find ourselves familiar with Roubaud, the deputy station-master, and with Severine, his wife, whom he has married from the house of the Chief-Justice Grandmorin, his godfather and guardian. Nothing more tender, pretty, or idyllic could begin a book than the telling of the railway official and his wife meeting in the little upstairs room of the Rue d'Amsterdam, and one almost hopes that M. Zola is going to give us at last a glad and clean book, such as he knows well how to write. But suddenly a little slip on the wife's part about a ring that she is wearing tears the veil away from the jealous eyes of her husband ; he discovers that she had in by-gone days improper relations with the chief justice ; and in a frenzy of rage and anguish he forces her, after a scene of frightful violence, to write a note to M. Grandmorin, which brings that aged debauchee into the train going back from Paris to Havre. During the passage of that train, Roubaud murders M. Grandmorin, obliging Severine to assist in the deed ; and from that hour forward the whole volume seems to be written in blood, so full are its red pages of the shadow of evil passions, assassinations, envies, hatreds, malice, and all uncharitableness.

It is not long before we make the acquaintance of Jacques Lantier, the driver of a locomotive engine named *La Lison*, which figures in the story as quite a special and living character. Jacques is the son of Gervaise, of "*L'Assommoir*," is perhaps the central personage of the book, and the one who links it with those previous volumes of Zola in which the fortunes of the Rougon-Macquart family have been evolved in that dark, gloomy, fateful chronicle so well known to M. Zola's readers. Jacques Lantier is a special example of that heredity on which Zola dwells so constantly. He is born with a latent passion in his blood to kill—a passion always specially aroused by the presence of any woman who awakens desire in him. It is not fair even to read or quote M. Zola in anything except French ; his style is one of his great attractions, being in the highest degree lucid, strong, and flexible. Moreover, most of his translators do him very poor justice,

traduttore traditore. “La Bête Humaine,” for instance, should by no means be rendered “Human Brutes,” the title given it in the American version, but, rather, “The Brute in Man”; and, to be brief, half the wonderful force of the French realist exhales when you strip him of his Gallic garb. But here is, so far as it goes, a passage in English defining the curse that lies upon Jacques Lantier :

“So it had opened again, that odious ulcer of his life, which he thought at last closed and healed ! Once more that insane impulse to kill, to kill a woman, just as a desire of her began to overpower his senses, that impulse which he had carried within him from his childhood up, had returned as the implacable plague of his existence. How well he remembered its first appearance : that little girl at Plassans, who had once kissed him on the lips with a kitten-like, caressing gesture. He had scissors then in his hands, and had to throw them away quick, quick, or he would have sunk them in her delicate pink and white neck. Who was he to have such a destiny meted to him ? His mother, Gervaise, bore him when hardly fifteen, and, before him, his brother Claude, the painter, also strange and wild in his mood. Later Etienne, another diseased branch of that same tainted tree. They all seemed ill balanced, with an hereditary insanity creeping out under one form or another. It appeared, at times, that he was not himself, but some one else, over whom he had not the least control, one who was leading him, in spite of all resistance, to shame and murder. Perhaps whole generations of fathers and grandfathers, drunkards and debauchees, were bound to bear such fruits, spoiled in the germ, and never to grow whole and healthy. He dared not touch alcohol, as one glass was enough to drive him crazy. But he felt, all the same, that the drunkard’s blood coursed in his veins, dragging him back, with its all-powerful grasp, to the savage instincts of the wild beasts of the field, to that first state of the primeval man, brutal and blood-thirsty.

“Indeed he hated them not, these wretched women he had so often felt like strangling or stabbing to death. He hardly knew them sometimes ; chance acquaintances of the street ; neighbors at some theater or stage ; scarcely spoken to, but always bringing home to him, with the first desire of possession, the stronger craving for immediate murder. A strange dullness would creep over his brain, and it seemed then as if he had to avenge some far off insult made to one of his race, in centuries past, by some woman who had left the hatred of her sex in the blood of the insulted one’s race ; and he thirsted for that revenge, as if he had but to slay his victim, to throw her panting body over his shoulder, and to walk into the wilderness, the deed done, his task accomplished.”

The masterly art of Zola is seen in this volume, as much as in any other of his extraordinary series, by the way in which he makes his story grow out of the business along the railway line, and brings into its scope all the daily and weekly incidents of a great main steam road. Just as the novel “L’Assommoir” had for its focus the life of the Paris workman, and that entitled “Au Bonheur

des Dames," the life of the Paris shopwoman, and "La Terre," again, the low and earthly desires and ideas of the French peasant, so this volume is a faithful mirror of railway existence and work; and it is with an amazing dexterity that the author weaves the daily passage of the trains and the traffic of the line into the terrible web of the sins and passions and sorrows of his characters. Incidentally one learns the working of trains, the actual routine of the officials who manage them, and it almost might be said, indeed, that the line from Havre to Paris is like an iron thread upon which are strung the lurid events and low crimes which blot the book from end to end with tears and blood. Severine and Roubaud keep their bad secret close, but, as in the case of that other absorbing story by the same author, "Therese Raquin," their crime has killed in their bosoms all love, and Roubaud turns to gambling, while his wife takes up with Jacques, the engine-driver.

There is an ugly, lonely house along the line, at the mouth of a long tunnel, which we get to know and shudder at as the mysterious centre of all the crime and misery of the story, *La Croix de Maufras*. Round this point a group of new characters gather: Flore, the signal-girl; Misard, the pointsman; Cabuche, the quarryman, and Pecqueux, the stoker, who in conjunction with Jacques drives the locomotive *La Lison*. This engine is the real mistress of Lantier; he is never tired of cleaning and polishing her, or of lavishly satisfying her eternal passion for oil, and we almost feel with him that she lives and has an existence and disposition of her own in the scenes where Jacques drives her through the piled-up snow, or in the last frightful catastrophe of her career, when Jacques tries to avoid the fatal collision which Flore has prepared for him in order to be avenged against Severine. The signal-girl smashes up the train, but fails to kill Jacques, and afterwards, in a fit of remorse and disappointment, goes into the tunnel and stands up full front on the line to meet the express, which crushes her. The evil current of the narrative presently draws Jacques and Severine into an absorbing desire to get rid of Roubaud, and it is while the engine-driver is waiting at the *Croix de Maufras* to assassinate her husband that the sudden impulse to slay, which always mixes with his brutal love, constrains him to turn upon Severine and to kill her with the very same knife which she had

given to her husband, and with which the Chief-Justice Grandmorin had been put to death in the train.

The gloomy and miserable atmosphere of the book—never for one instant relieved except by the accurate pictures of railway life and the working of this great road—becomes more and more darkened by the low avarice of Misard, who slowly poisons his wife to get hold of a thousand francs, which she has hidden, and by the vulgar quarrels and vile amours of the railway-staff people at Havre, Rouen, and Paris. With Severine's death, the hereditary curse lurking in the blood of Lantier is fulfilled, and here is such a translation as I find to hand of the feelings of the man, as Zola depicts them :

“So, at last he had satiated himself ; he had killed ! Yes, he had done it ! A boundless joy, a monstrous feeling of contentment, filled his whole being, in the triumph of the accomplished deed. He enjoyed a fierce surprise of satisfied pride ; he was indeed the male, lording it over the minor race. That woman—he possessed her at last, as he had always dreamed to possess her ; he had her whole self, even to annihilation. Never could she belong to any other. And he remembered also the corpse of Chief-Justice Grandmorin, lying on the track, limp and rag-like. Just such a wretched object she was now ; a mere puppet, empty and worthless ; a stab of a knife had made that of a human, living creature. Was it not in the presence of the other murdered body that he had sworn to himself to taste these acute delights of killing ? While leaning over the dead man's remains, he felt running through his whole being a thirst for blood and murder. Oh ! to know now that he was no coward ! that he had had the courage to plunge the knife into that throat ! The craving had grown in him slowly and surely. For a year he had marched, step by step, toward the inevitable deed. Upon the throat of the woman stretched before his eyes the two crimes had met, as it were, brought together by the implacable logic of fate.”

But the baneful influence of the *Croix de Maufras* is not yet exhausted ! Jacques has got a new engine, *La Lison* having been broken to pieces ; and has taken up with a new mistress in Philomène, the companion of Pecqueux, the stoker. This man who was, beforetimes, faithful and devoted as a dog to Lantier, and always associated with him on the foot-board and the locomotive and in the station lodgings, becomes possessed of a fierce jealousy and hatred towards him, and there occurs a very powerful description of the last ride these two men take together, conducting from Havre to Paris a train full of soldiers who are going to the war with Prussia. One may deny many merits to Zola, but never that of dramatic force. It is beyond measure impressive to read those last pages, where the two men, now become bitter enemies,

struggle to the death on their flying engine, hurling each other at last in a fatal embrace on to the track, where both are cut to pieces, while behind their abandoned engine those eighteen cars, full of drunken, singing, and shouting "food for powder," fly along the line through the night to a fatal smash-up. Most skillfully does the author make his blind, mad, runaway locomotive an image of Fate dragging the victims of his genius through blood and woe unspeakable to their wretched destiny. In the last paragraphs of this terrible book its characters and the express train seem to be whirled together out of sight into a black cloud of woe and wickedness which closes over all. To quote once more the very imperfect translation published in America :

"But now all the telegraphic bells upon the line were ringing, all hearts were wildly beating, at the news of the phantom train which had just passed Rouen and Sotteville. There was a great shudder of deathly fright. No doubt the express ahead would not by any chance escape. And the train, like a wild boar in a thicket, rolled on, mindless of signals or dynamite fuses. It almost upset a pilot engine at Oissel; it terrified Pont-de-l'Arche as it passed the station with undiminished speed. And, disappearing again, it rolled on, it rolled on, to the mysterious over-there !

"What mattered the victims the engine crushed on her way ! Did she not drive on toward the future, heedless of the blood that poured like water ? Without a driver, in the night, like a blind and deaf brute let loose among the dead and dying, she rolled on and on, ever dragging behind her that flesh to the cannon pledged, these soldiers stupefied by wine and fatigue—who sang."

A clean sweep is thus at last made by the author of his *dramatis personæ*. Grandmorin, Severine, Flore, Lantier, Pecqueux, Misard's wife, Cabuche, are all killed or dead ; Roubaud is gone to the galleys for life, and the express train full of howling soldiers rushes in the very last line out of sight to a ghastly catastrophe. Horrible from beginning to end, the book leaves upon the mind an overpowering sense of "the beast in man," and, for my part, as soon as I had finished it I went to the side of the steamer and hurled it as far as I could into the sweeping billows of the Atlantic, with a feeling that no other eyes should have the pain of perusing it.

Nevertheless, as a man of letters myself, I must acknowledge, and do acknowledge, the marvellous power of this great master of fiction. Zola's theory of human life is detestable ; his choice of subjects is repulsive ; his treatment of them is too often needlessly and aggressively coarse and offensive ; and he exaggerates to the

point of monstrosity the evil in humanity at the expense of the good. His study is a dissecting-room, where nothing interests or engages that poisoned scalpel, his pen, except the cadaverous and the diseased. Even allowing all the importance he claims for this great and well-established principle of heredity, it is still the case that good is as much inherited as bad, and is so vastly a predominating force in the universe that in the working of these two rival principles nature is always rooting out and healing the inherited evil. M. Zola forgets, or for the purpose of his art ignores, the fact that virtuous propensities are bequeathed from generation to generation, as well as vicious. As far as human life is concerned, and its true study, we might as well take the incurable ward in a great hospital as a specimen of the daily existence of mankind, and leave utterly out of sight the pure and happy homes, the bright society, the glad and graceful intercourse, the countless unrecorded brave and unselfish deeds, the gentle general flow of human existence. I find in a local journal, this very morning, the *Detroit Tribune*, some observations which are very much to the point on this head as regards novels and newspapers. The journal remarks :

“Look over your morning paper and you receive the impression that the world is filled with crime and disaster. You lay it aside with a feeling almost of despair. But you were abroad all day yesterday, threading miles of streets and mingling with thousands of people, and you saw no crime committed. You did see, however, enough of duty done, of kindly helpfulness, of cheerful self-sacrifice in time, convenience, and service, to have filled a dozen newspapers with the recital of them. Here are columns of the papers filled for weeks with the doings of one woman who is said to have poisoned her husband. Well, you know of some wife whose daily self-sacrifice for a helpless husband would furnish materials of noble heroism for a volume; but such devotion is so common as to pass without comment. Wifely devotion is not ‘news,’ while wifely infidelity is news, and there is a deep, hopeful, reassuring meaning in it. It would be a bad world if it had to be raked all over every day to find good deeds sufficient to fill a newspaper.”

Nevertheless, incurable wards do exist in our hospitals, and taints of hereditary insanity do affect the blood, and sin and selfishness and wild, low passions do exist among us too widely and too palpably to be ignored; and I am not one of those who would for one moment deny to M. Zola the right to choose these sombre themes for his extraordinary art. I do not even think his books immoral. If they be immoral in the sense of being mercilessly outspoken, coarse, revolting, and painfully true to our lowest

nature, he would still have a right, in my opinion, to paint upon his rough canvas whatever picture suited him best, so long as he did not paint for the sake of pruriency or the amusement of the vile-minded. Art *quâ* art has nothing whatever to do with the boundaries of morality as they are laid down in Sunday-schools and Young Men's Christian Associations. It violates its own truest rules only when it depicts the truth, as a pander, not as a painter. In the cellars of our British Museum in London are justly hidden away some works in marble, of such superb execution, such life-like creation, that nothing above ground in public sight approaches them for artistic excellence. They were the embellishments of certain rich Roman villas at Capri and Naples in days when the best Roman art lent itself to the worst desires. In these splendid, but wicked, works, art has dethroned herself, because her motive was unroyal and disloyal; but I do not think such can be said of M. Zola and his books.

Weak minds would be much more easily corrupted by "Madame De Bovary" or "Mademoiselle De Maupin," the well-accepted works of Flaubert and of Gautier, than by even the brutal "La Terre" or the terrible "L'Assommoir" of our author; nay, I consider some of his books as distinctly and powerfully of a most moral tendency; for example, "Therese Raquin," which could not be read even by a criminally-minded man without a shudder at himself and his inclinations. As for the subtle charm of Zola's style, I well remember bringing that book from Paris on a stormy day to read as I recrossed the Channel. The sea was rough, the rain and spray flying, and in my not very comfortable corner on deck I commenced the perusal of that awful book. After some time, when everybody had gone below seeking refuge from the weather, I felt rather cold myself, and looked at my watch, but, making a mistake, mistook the hour, and imagined that we had been at sea only some fifteen minutes. I therefore went on reading the passage which absorbed me at the close of the volume, and suddenly heard the cry "Dover! Dover!" showing that eighty minutes of time had passed away like eight minutes without my notice, under the spell of Zola's wonderful genius. In regard to philosophy and the theory of human life, no man can be farther away from my views than this cynical and unsparing French pessimist; but I recognize with admiration his stupendous genius as a realist, and I am quite sure that posterity

will keep, as painful but precious memorials of our time, the dark and dismal studies that he has made of this our humanity, which, if it touches heaven on one side, certainly plunges deep into its native clay on the other.

I flung "Therese Raquin" into the Channel, as I threw "La Bête Humaine" overboard into the Atlantic; so that I am no propagandist of the ideas of M. Zola; but those who can read him in the French, in which alone he should be studied, know nothing at all of criticism if they style him less than a great master; and I have here at least candidly answered you as to what book has impressed me most painfully, but most permanently, of all those that I have chanced to read during the past ten or twelve months.

EDWIN ARNOLD.

GAIL HAMILTON:

THE most impressive book that I have ever seen is *The Modern Iphigenia*, an English story by an English author whose name has not been known to American literature. The work owes its power to no charm of style, no artistic grouping of details, no dramatic development of cause and effect; but to the deadly distinctness with which it reveals the sombre, sacrificial fires of pagandom glowing on Christian altars.

The glory of the English race is its self-government. The glory of the English occupation of India is its splendid organization. A crowned conqueror, England submits to the laws which it has imposed upon the conquered. Before its majesty the lowest pariah is on a level with the highest nabob—nay, with the haughtiest ruler of the ruling race.

Yet in this England, our mother land, the home of justice, the light of Asia, an altar of savage lawlessness is reared and *Iphigenia* lies thereon, bound and speechless, yet

"Dimly can descry
The stern, black-bearded kings, with wolfish eyes,
Waiting to see her die."

And over those kings a Queen whose white hands, calm and cruel,—please heaven, unconscious of their cruelty!—bind the slow cords into their final knot of torture.

For *Iphigenia* is no myth, of doubtful origin or reality. She is a living woman, and her altar is the prison of penal servitude.

A living woman with the habits and associations of ancestral culture ; a mother, of passionate devotion, torn from her children, who are robbed even of her name and given to another woman ; a daughter, the sole comfort of a mother whose moans should move the pitying skies—" Would God I could die for thee, O my child ! my child ! "

The modern Iphigenia is an American girl, become an English subject by a marriage at eighteen to an Englishman of twice her age, who dies eight years afterwards. The brothers-in-law come out of the dying man's room with a will professing to have been signed by him, leaving them sole control of his property and his children. They, who have already thrust his wife from his bedside, a servant who has already foully betrayed her mistress's trust, a meddlesome, middle-aged gossip who was once betrothed to the young woman's husband, and who is now divorced from her own, concoct a theory that the young wife poisoned her husband. A mysterious illness falls upon her some hours before her husband's death, and holds her speechless and unconscious for many hours after, during all which time the conspirators are balefully busy. The police are introduced, not to make discoveries, but to adopt the discoveries which the conspirators allege themselves to have made, and the theory of guilt which they have already framed. The doctors swallow the poison of asps placed under their lips, though they frankly swear they had never suspected or thought of poison until it was suggested to them by the conspirators. The dead body is explored, but no poison is found. Nevertheless, the stern, black-bearded kings, with wolfish eyes, of whom the rapacious brothers-in-law are chief, surround the bed where the foreordained victim lies, still dazed and prostrate, with no friend of her blood near, and summon her from the Valley of the Shadow of Death with the announcement that she is under arrest for murder !

Forceibly restraining her natural convulsion at the shock, even to laying their coarse hands upon her bared and shrinking limbs, they snatch her from the bed, from the arms of her too late summoned mother, to the hideous gaol. Another and more determined exploration is made into the exhumed body of the dead, and is rewarded by the desired "find"—a minute particle of arsenic, harmless, medicinal, of such widely-distributed sort as the eminent Parisian chemist Raspail declared he could find in

the judge's arm-chair—even beyond that, abundantly accounted for by the husband's well-known habit of taking arsenic, or by the doctor's drugs prescribed to him in his last illness,—but still arsenic.

The young mother is haled before the judge, and the judge casts her into prison.

“It is necessary to an unfavorable verdict that the man died of arsenic,” is the judicial principle laid down at the outset to the jury.

The trial does not prove that he died of arsenic. The overwhelming evidence is that he did not die of arsenic. But he must! The stern, black-bearded kings, with wolfish eyes, will wait in vain to see their victim die, if her husband were not murdered.

The adroit judge shifts his ground. He no longer asks: “Was this man poisoned to death?” He asks: “Why did this woman poison him?” He no longer says to the jury: “You must prove that the man died of arsenic.” He says: “You must *not* merely consider whether this man did or did not die of arsenic according to the medical evidence. . . . You *must rely upon your knowledge of human nature* as to the results at which you will arrive”!

The jury heeds the hint. Abandoning the evidence, this English jury of farmers and bakers and milliners and plumbers betake themselves to their “knowledge of human nature,” and on that knowledge bring in a verdict that this young mother poisoned her husband to death.

It is incredible, but it is contemporary English history. It is not a myth. It is in the records of English law which are collected in this book.

“The bright death quivered at the victim's throat,” but the horror of a great people quenched the gleam. The law was forced to call a halt upon itself by the popular revolt. The executive officer dared not execute. The bright death quivered, but the man who held it dared not thrust it in for fear of the people; yet dared not unbind the victim for fear of the judge: so he smothered sentence and reprieve alike in sophistry.

“It is essential that the man died of arsenic,” had pronounced the judge.

“There is a reasonable doubt whether he died of arsenic,” pronounced the executive.

What, then, was the only righteous course? The judge himself had indicated it in his charge to the jury: "Are we sure, beyond all reasonable doubt, that she is guilty? If she is not, she is—NOT GUILTY."

The executive says: "There is reasonable doubt whether she is guilty; but she is—GUILTY."

And the throat which they dare not pierce, they clutch. Her youth is blasted with a curse, and she is cut off from hope in that sad place which yet to name my spirit loathes and fears.

If England is a pagan nation, what sword shall sever the cords of innocence upon the altar of sacrifice?

If England is a Christian nation, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of this sepulchre wherein a living creature lies enshrouded?

But not only, not even first, is the individual suffering. It is the menace to order, it is the peril to life and liberty and free institutions; it is the temptation to revolution; it is the defiance of law by the law-makers; it is the mockery of justice by its administrators; it is the crime against society by the leaders of society; it is the obtrusion of heathenism into Christendom, that makes this outrage ominous.

Victoria!

"Not alone in the East is she greatest and best.

We own the sweet sway of Victoria, West.

By her womanly worth, without contest or cost,

She has won back the empire her grandfather lost.

Her white hand was peace when our trouble was sore:

By that sign she is queen of our hearts evermore.

The ligeance of love sea nor sword shall dis sever—

God's blessing be on her forever and ever!"

Thus we sang, thrilled with her high thought and honorable words to us in our time of storm and stress. We resent upon that white hand, that mother's hand, that friendly hand, the stain of innocent blood, besmeared thereon by lawlessness in the masquerade of law. Out, damned spot! All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten that little hand. It will, rather, the multitudinous seas incarnadine that roll between. The ligeance of love sea nor sword shall dis sever, but no ties can resist the dissolving force of wrong perpetrated and perpetuated. "The Queen can do no wrong" is the fiction of monarchy. The conviction of republicanism is: The Queen is Queen, our Queen, only so far as she does right.

Thus my book. It is not *called* The Modern Iphigenia. It borrows no romance from the past. It bears the dry legal title of "The Maybrick Case." It is by that most unhomeric of heroes, a London lawyer, whose canny Scotch name is Alexander MacDougall. But, for all its legal reasoning and repetition, it is vital with unquenchable fire; that eternal revolt of the human heart against tyranny crushing helplessness which has lent passion to poetry, and stimulus to passion, and purpose to life through all the ages of history, but which in our day and our race flames up against a tragedy which is an anachronism.

GAIL HAMILTON.

MISS REPLIER:

EVER since the first printers with misguided zeal dipped an innocent world in ink, those books have been truly popular which reflected faithfully and enthusiastically the foibles and delusions of the hour. This is what is called "keeping abreast with the spirit of the times," and we have only to look around us at present to see the principle at work. With an arid and dreary realism chilling us to the heart, and sad-voiced novelists entreating us at every turn to try to cultivate religious doubts, fiction has ceased to be a medium of delight. Even nihilism, which is the only form of relief that true earnestness permits, is capable of being overstrained, and some narrowly conservative people are beginning to ask themselves already whether this new development of "murder as a fine art" has not been sufficiently encouraged. Out of the midst of the gloom, out of the confusion and depression of conflicting forms of seriousness, rises from London a voice, clear, languid, musical, shaken with laughter, and speaking in strange sweet tones of art and beauty, and of that finer criticism which is one with art and beauty, and claims them forever as its own. The voice comes from Mr. Oscar Wilde, and few there are who listen to him, partly because his philosophy is alien to our prevalent modes of thought, and partly because of the perverse and paradoxical fashion in which he delights to give it utterance. People are more impressed by the way a thing is said than by the thing itself. A grave arrogance of demeanor, a solemn and self-assertive method of reiterating an opinion until it grows weighty with words, are weapons more convincing than any subtlety of

argument. "As I have before expressed to the still reverberating discontent of two continents," this is the mode in which the public loves to have a statement offered to its ears, that it may gape, and wonder, and acquiesce.

Now, nothing can be further from such admirable solidity than Mr. Wilde's flashing sword-play; than the glee with which he makes out a case against himself, and then proceeds valiantly into battle. There are but four essays in his recent volume, rather vaguely called "Intentions," and of these four only two have real and permanent value. "The Truth of Masks" is a somewhat trivial paper, inserted apparently to help fill up the book, and "Pen, Pencil, and Poison" is visibly lacking in sincerity. The author plays with his subject very much as his subject, "kind, light-hearted Wainwright," played with crime, and in both cases there is a subtle and discordant element of vulgarity. It is not given to our eminently respectable age to reproduce that sumptuous and horror-laden atmosphere which lends an artistic glamor to the poisonous court of the Medicis. This "study in green" contains, however, some brilliant passages, and at least one sentence—"The domestic virtues are not the true basis of art, though they may serve as an excellent advertisement for second-rate artists"—that must make Mr. George Moore pale with envy when he reflects that he missed saying it, where it belongs, in his clever, truthful, ill-natured paper on "Mummer-Worship."

The significance and the charm of Mr. Wilde's book are centred in its opening chapter, "The Decay of Lying," reprinted from *The Nineteenth Century*, and in the long two-part essay entitled "The Critic as Artist," which embodies some of his most thoughtful, serious, and scholarly work. My own ineffable content rests with "The Decay of Lying," because under its transparent mask of cynicism, its wit, its satire, its languid mocking humor, lies clearly outlined a great truth that is slipping fast away from us,—the absolute independence of art—art nourished by imagination and revealing beauty. This is the hand that gilds the grayness of the world; this is the voice that sings in flute tones through the silence of the ages. To degrade this shining vision into a handmaid of nature, to maintain that she should give us photographic pictures of an unlovely life, is a heresy that arouses in Mr. Wilde an amused scorn which takes the place of anger. "Art," he says, "never expresses anything but itself.

It has an independent life, just as Thought has, and develops purely on its own lines. It is not necessarily realistic in an age of realism, nor spiritual in an age of faith. So far from being the creation of its time, it is usually in direct opposition to it, and the only history that it preserves for us is the history of its own progress." That we should understand this, it is necessary to understand also the "beautiful untrue things" which exist only in the world of fancy; the things that are lies, and yet that help us to endure the truth. Mr. Wilde repudiates distinctly and almost energetically all lying with an object, all sordid trifling with a graceful gift. The lies of newspapers yield him no pleasure; the lies of politicians are ostentatiously unconvincing; the lies of lawyers are "briefed by the prosaic." He reviews the world of fiction with a swift and caustic touch; he lingers among the poets; he muses rapturously over those choice historic masterpieces, from Herodotus to Carlyle, where "facts are either kept in their proper subordinate position, or else entirely excluded on the general ground of dulness." He laments with charming frankness the serious virtues of his age. "Many a young man," he says, "starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration which, if nurtured in congenial and sympathetic surroundings, or by the imitation of the best models, might grow into something really great and wonderful. But, as a rule, he comes to nothing. He either falls into careless habits of accuracy, or takes to frequenting the society of the aged and the well-informed. Both things are equally fatal to his imagination, and in a short time he develops a morbid and unhealthy faculty of truth-telling, begins to verify all statements made in his presence, has no hesitation in contradicting people who are much younger than himself, and often ends by writing novels that are so like life that no one can possibly believe in their probability." Surely this paragraph has but one peer in the world of letters, and that is the immortal sentence wherein De Quincey traces the murderer's gradual downfall to incivility and procrastination.

"The Critic as Artist" affords Mr. Wilde less scope for his humor and more for his erudition, which, perhaps, is somewhat lavishly displayed. Here he pleads for the creative powers of criticism, for its fine restraints, its imposed self-culture, and he couches his plea in words as rich as music. Now and then, it is true, he seems driven by the whips of our modern Furies to the

verge of things which are not his to handle—problems, social and spiritual, to which he holds no key. When this occurs, we can only wait with drooping heads and what patience we can muster until he is pleased to return to his theme ; or until he remembers, laughing, how fatal is the habit of imparting opinions, and what a terrible ordeal it is to sit at table with the man who has spent his life in educating others rather than himself. “For the development of the race depends on the development of the individual, and where self-culture has ceased to be the ideal, the intellectual standard is instantly lowered, and often ultimately lost.” I like to fancy the ghost of the late rector of Lincoln, of him who said that an appreciation of Milton was the reward of consummate scholarship, listening in the Elysian Fields, and nodding his assent to this much-neglected view of a much-disputed question. Everybody is now so busy teaching that nobody has any time to learn. We are growing rich in lectures, but poor in scholars, and the triumph of mediocrity is at hand. Mr. Wilde can hardly hope to become popular by proposing real study to people burning to impart their ignorance ; but the criticism that develops in the mind a more subtle quality of apprehension and discernment is the criticism that creates the intellectual atmosphere of the age.

AGNES REPPLIER.

MRS. BARR :

THERE was once a pope who desired to destroy all the books in the world except 6,000, which number he averred would contain all of human wisdom worth preserving. This computation would give about an average of one good book every year. Is there any one living whose taste and acquirements are so catholic, so judicial, and yet so sympathetic, that he might be safely intrusted with the selection of the book of the year ? The answer must be a universal “No.”

For over half a century my intercourse with books has been constant, but during 1891 we have been on a holiday together. During this year I have begun to read newspapers, and to defend my lapse of mental dignity by saying that but for newspapers many things could only be known at a cost too great to pay. I have also required six magazines every month, and have felt it to

be necessary to supplement these by reviews that supplied history, social science, literature, and philosophy put up in portable forms. For at sixty years of age it strikes one forcibly that life is shorter than ever in proportion to what has to be crowded into it, and that our minds are not more capacious. I have even come to a good opinion of the funny newspapers. I believe they are one of the best popular antidotes for the dead-alive, serious sensuality of bad novels. A hearty laugh blows into thin air romantic animalism, and all that mock sensuality which depicts men and women who call their vices by the names of passions.

Yet, amid much desultory reading, there is in every student's mind an inner circle, to which none but really good books are admitted, and the most charming of these intimates of 1891 has been the Rev. Adam Sedgwick's "Life and Letters." I invited the book because in my girlhood the great geologist was such a familiar figure about the mountains and towns of the English lake district. And through it we have had delightful conversations about people and times that will never return—grand old "statesmen" riding along the mountain roads, with their wives on the gorgeous family pillion, and their pretty daughters, in long flowing scarlet cloaks and silken hoods, stepping briskly at their side; of the old ways and celebrities of Cambridge; of the burial of Porson; of the ringing of a dumb peal at St. Mary's for Trafalgar; of the mail coach coming into Lowestoft streaming with ribbons, and carrying a sailor on the top waving the Union Jack, while the guard threw down to the cheering crowds the *Gazette Extraordinary* of the battle of Salamanca. And what stirring descriptions of the geological "meets" when sixty or seventy undergraduates met before the Senate House, and then all off together for a grand "field day" among the fens or up to the northern mountains! In those days the Cambridge liverymen charged extra for horses used for "jollygizing," and no wonder! Through this book I could feel the enthusiasm with which men listened to the first words of the new science of geology, and to those wonderful lectures on "The Great Irish Elk," and on the "Dragons of the Prime," while Sedgwick's eloquence

"rolled like a deluge retiring,
Which mastodon carcasses floated."

I am not sure if this delightful biography has been reprinted in America; if not, some publisher will doubtless soon find it out.

Another book of 1891, but of a decidedly different character, has made a very marked impression upon my mind. Its name is unattractive, and, until the book is once read through, seems to have no special significance. Its binding is rigidly plain and there is nothing whatever to point to its author. "God in His World"—this is the title, and one is apt to think the writer must be a clergyman, until startled continually by such sentences as the following: "There is no need of an atonement to reconcile God unto man. . . . [Christ] is the Lamb of God, not the scape-goat" (p. 138); or, "Justice is not a divine attribute. It has in it no divine quality, no vital meaning, either as applied to Nature or to the kingdom of heaven" (p. 140); or, "Even though the church should die, the kingdom will live. . . . The Father worketh in all humanity and not in a chosen part. What if he raise up children unto his kingdom from among the children of this world, seeing that they are in their generation wiser than the children of light, in that they more readily throw aside tradition and show a quicker and more vigorous life? What if he seek his own among them that are repelled by the dead forms and artificial solemnities which he himself abhorreth?" (p. 255.)

There is a sequence in writers as in everything else, and this book is a carrying-forward of that spirit of natural religiosity which evoked its remarkable predecessor by Professor Drummond. And that I am not able to define the serious and peculiar charm of "God in His World" takes nothing from it. A person may not be able technically to distinguish between good wine and bad wine, but when it is set before him he will drink more of the good than of the bad, having an inarticulate consciousness of the difference. So in a book we may not be able to explain the very excellence which has yet most impressed us.

In fiction I have read many short stories, and very good most of them appeared to me. Our fathers followed the stars of their gods, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, etc.; and we have our own idols. Tolstoï has been one of mine, but this year—and last year too—he has disappointed me. I make him welcome still; but I no longer salaam to him. He is too many Tolstoïs. I had just begun to admire his dry realism, when I found out he was not a realist, but a mystic. The gloomy horror of the "Kreutzer Sonata" debased him from the altitude of mysticism; and in his last work, "The Fruits of Enlightenment," he pays a visit full of

sardonic mirth, in which spiritualism and microbes are leading motives. It is clever, but not what I expected from Tolstoï; and his excessive versatility makes one unavoidably remember the elderly naval man that "was a cook, and a captain bold, and the mate of the Nancy brig, and a bo'sun tight, and a midship-mite."

During 1891 no one has sung a song for me; perhaps that is because I have grown too old, and the singing birds have no message to bring. For now I like the old songs best, and I have a fancy that, though the gods never permit poets to be mediocre, modern publishers do. I feel kindly, however, to every book I place upon my shelves. I get out of my library that confused, soothing influence a man gets out of his pipe. The books shine with kindness and mild gravity; they diffuse an atmosphere of stillness and gentle warmth; and I love to sit quietly among them, just speculating as to whether the spirits of books disembodied ever clothe themselves again in paper and calf and morocco, or retain any traceable connection with their former selves. And any thinker can tell how delightful such questions and speculations may be, without individualizing a single volume.

AMELIA E. BARR.

PROF. BRIGGS:

THE year 1891 has been fruitful in great theological writings. Oxford has produced no less than three of these, by Canon Driver, Principal Gore, and Canon Cheyne. Canon Driver gives a masterly exposition of the present state of opinion as to the criticism of the entire literature of the Old Testament. Principal Gore gives an able and brilliant statement of one of the most important topics of Christology. But the Bampton lectures of Canon Cheyne on the "Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter, in the Light of Old Testament Criticism and the History of Religion,"* constitute, in our estimation, the most important theological work of the year. These lectures were delivered in 1889, but first appeared in print in the summer of 1891. The author is somewhat cramped by the form of the lecture; but he has managed by numerous notes and appendices to give the freshest, richest, and most fruitful piece of criticism that has appeared for many a year; showing an amount of original research and a

* Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.

wealth of knowledge that can hardly be surpassed by any biblical scholar now living.

Canon Cheyne, in his introduction, gives a sketch of the development of his own critical experience. He tells us, in a frank, modest, naïve, and charming manner, his progress through those periods of criticism which have been under the spell of Ewald and Kuenen; and of his loneliness in Great Britain until W. Robertson Smith and Samuel R. Driver came to his support. Now the mass of biblical scholars of Great Britain are with him in spirit and methods, if not agreeing with him in all his results. Cheyne has throughout his career kept in touch with the religious life of the Church of England and also with the evangelical piety of the school of Delitzsch; so that his growth has been steady and comprehensive. This is doubtless due in great measure to his earliest teacher, to whom he attributes "the example of a mild and yet fervent Johannine religion and a Pauline love of the Scriptures." Any one who knows Cheyne will recognize that these qualities are essential constituents of his character. Notwithstanding all that he has learned from Continental scholars, he has ever been an independent, painstaking student, never accepting anything without submitting it to fresh, independent investigation; brave and frank, and yet shy and cautious; true to the instincts of an Anglican scholar. He, more than any one else, has been the pioneer of Old Testament criticism in England. He is entitled to speak in its interests, for he has passed through its various phases. Even when we may differ with him, his words are those of a master who must be respected.

The Psalter is in some respects the most interesting book in the Old Testament. It is used in the devotions, public and private, of synagogue and church throughout the world. No book awakens a more general interest. The critical movement of modern times has for the most part left it aside, doubtless on account of the extreme difficulty of the problems, as any one must recognize who has given any attention to the subject. It has long been evident that the Psalter was the key to the Old Testament. Biblical criticism will never attain its end with regard to Pentateuch or prophets until the Psalter has given its witness and the whole Old Testament speaks in unison the last word. Cheyne deserves great credit for undertaking this difficult problem and for opening it so bravely and so well.

The traditional opinion for centuries was that David was the author of the Psalter, as Solomon was the author of the Wisdom literature, and Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. Criticism has resolved all these into groups of writings of different authors and different periods of composition. After the traditional theory was abandoned, there was a rally about the five books into which the Psalter has been divided from the most ancient times, and the titles of the psalms were supposed to give a number of authors, such as David, Asaph, Solomon, Moses, and the sons of Korah, and to leave a number of psalms orphaned, without designation of author. But this theory soon proved untenable. The groups assigned to Asaph and the sons of Korah have certain features that justify their grouping under these names; but the internal evidence of these psalms showed that they belonged to different periods, and could not have been written by Asaph and the Korahites of the Davidic period. The psalms assigned to David also represented widely different periods of composition. Do these ascriptions represent conjectures of later editors as to authorship, or do they simply mean that these psalms were taken from earlier collections that bore the names of David, of Asaph, and of the Korahites?

Cheyne holds that the five books represent, in the main, successive layers of the Psalter; only he very properly states that the division between books 4 and 5 was an afterthought; and he really does away with the distinction between books 2 and 3, and divides the whole Psalter into three sections representing, in the main, the Persian, Greek, and Maccabean periods. Cheyne also represents that the ascription to David meant nothing more, originally, than a group of psalms gathered under the name of the poet-king; but that afterwards not a few psalms were ascribed to David by mistaken conjectures of later editors. It seems to us that Cheyne halts in his criticism at these points. Doubtless there are mistaken conjectures as to authorship in the titles of the psalms; but, on the whole, the titles seem to represent three earlier minor psalters, which were named after David, Asaph, and the Korahites, a greater Psalter made up chiefly of selections from these, called the Director's Psalter, besides a number of groups such as the Hallel's and the Pilgrim psalms. We cannot see anything more in the five books than a liturgical division to correspond with the Pentateuch. When the divisions are very properly

reduced to three, they do not then represent different layers of the Psalter, but divisions made by the Maccabean editor prior to the division into five books.

The critical study of the Psalter has resulted in the constant pushing of the psalms into later periods in the history of Israel. Cheyne goes farther in this direction than any previous writer. Most scholars now recognize that there are Maccabean psalms as well as Davidic psalms, and that the Psalter represents the psalmody of Israel in all that intervening period. But the number of Davidic psalms, and, indeed, preëxilic psalms, has been steadily diminishing in the closer study of the Psalter. Even the more conservative critics feel themselves forced to give up the antiquity of one psalm after another. Cheyne seems to take an extreme position when he represents that we have no preëxilic psalm save a portion of the eighteenth, and that we must also give up exilic psalms, and when he distributes the psalms over the Persian, Greek, and Maccabean periods.

We have no space to follow him into the details of his argument. He tries to give the psalms their historic setting in those times and circumstances which seem to be the most appropriate for the purpose. All the resources of history, comparative biblical theology, and the religions of Babylon and Persia, are used to cast light upon the composition of the psalms and the gradual evolution of the Psalter. The argument from language is not neglected, but it is not employed with much effect. It will doubtless appear to some that Cheyne does not sufficiently estimate the editorial changes that have been made to adapt earlier psalms to the later use of the synagogue; and that the imagination is too freely employed to color the psalms with the hues of the history of the times in which he places them; and that, in a measure, the same mistake is repeated that was made by the older scholars, who strove to find the historical occasions of the psalms in the life and experience of David. And yet the careful reader will be convinced that in a large number of cases Cheyne has put psalms in their most appropriate historic circumstances, and that he has given them a new and richer meaning.

There is doubtless a sad loss and a strain upon the faith of those who have been accustomed to look upon the Psalter as David's psalm-book, or as the expression of the experience of worshippers in the temple of Solomon. But criticism

has made it evident that David composed but few of the psalms, to say the least; and that the Psalter was not a temple hymn-book, but a hymn-and prayer-book for the synagogue wherever the different psalms themselves may have been composed. It matters little, therefore, where you place these psalms in the historic development of Israel. Wherever they seem most appropriate to the evolution of life and thought of the Jewish people, there they will take on the richest coloring and the fullest meaning. If, as Cheyne supposes, the Psalter represents the religious experience of Israel after the restoration in the Persian, Greek, and Maccabean periods, then the chasm that used to be regarded as separating the Old Testament from the New Testament is filled up; and an unbroken continuity of divine revelation in sacred writings takes its place. This is more in accord with what one might expect from the living and true God. He would not abandon his people for centuries after restoring them to their own land. He would continue to guide them and teach them. This would be a gain that would far outweigh the loss in the supposed greater antiquity of the Psalter.

One of the most interesting and valuable parts of Canon Cheyne's work is his study of the Persian religion and the influence that it had upon the psalms and other postexilic writings. The student of biblical history and of biblical theology, in our day, must take into consideration the ethnic environment of the biblical writers. He must recognize that the holy people as the kingdom of priests, called to mediate redemption for the nations of the world, not only had something precious to give, but also some gifts to receive in return, and that there were action and reaction in the relation of Israel to the nations in all that long period in which Israel seemed to be the foot-ball tossed to and fro between them.

C. A. BRIGGS.

JULIEN GORDON:

WHEN invited to express an opinion on the book of the year, one is met at the outset with peculiar difficulty. One asks one's self, in this age of many writers and numberless readers, if it is a public verdict one is to voice or an individual predilection. Of a book people make such different—nay, divergent—uses. The moralist seeks a sermon, and demands that he shall be taught a

lesson. The doubter craves a new *Credo* ; the scientist, a fresh problem solved, or at least suggested ; the æsthete, a work of art that shall please his fancy and warm his imagination ; while the frivolous desires only to be entertained for a half-hour. In this clash of sentiments and wants, it is assuredly no light task to select a work that can meet or has met the general requirements.

A treatise which touches upon topics of immediate moment were perhaps the fittest to dub "the book of the year." It alone can be considered important and authoritative. I think in Mr. Herbert Spencer's "Justice," Part Fourth of his "Principles of Ethics," we have such an *exposé*.

Since the death of John Stuart Mill, that pioneer of the cause of woman, England has produced no such leading thinker as Herbert Spencer. There is not to-day in France, in Germany, or in America, any writer upon sociology who can even be compared with him. A new book by this great philosopher may therefore be viewed with the interest which is evoked in a politically disturbed country by a manifesto emanating from its sovereign or its prime minister. It cannot be denied that in "Justice" Mr. Spencer considers questions of burning and urgent import. He has something to say, in his opening chapter, of "animal ethics," of ethics considered not merely as calling forth sentiments of approbation or reprobation, but of ethics considered objectively, as producing good and bad results to "self or others or both." He tells us that a bird who feeds his mate while she is sitting is regarded with approval ; while for a hen who declines to look after her eggs there is aversion. The egoism of animals is deplored, and their altruistic acts are admired. This may give food for thought to those advanced naturalists who insist upon the higher intelligence of what we are now pleased to call "the dumb creatures," and who believe we shall soon learn to exchange ideas with our dogs and horses by means of learning to understand their now incomprehensible volapük. When this is done, we shall study them with even greater interest than those queer animals men and women study each other in modern drawing-rooms.

He tells us, in his chapter upon the "Idea of Justice," that this idea is developed from the recognition of inequality. If, therefore, there were no inequality, justice would be a mere word, a term, no more. He glances at the "right of physical integrity," the value and protection of the person, the sanctity of

human life. He carries us from the days when the rude Wends and Herulians killed their aged and sick parents, to the present time, when the growth of civilization has awarded to the citizen a claim against his fellow citizen for bodily danger, not only willingly inflicted, but for bodily danger caused by careless actions or inactions.

He has some pregnant words to say upon the "Rights of Property," and of incorporeal property, wherein the demands of authors and artists for proper remuneration for mental labor are broached.

The "Rights of Free Belief and Worship" are dwelt upon. He would here accord absolute liberty, except where the beliefs entertained and practised would diminish the powers of defence against hostile societies, or imperil subordination to the government, thus paralyzing its executive powers. He prophesies that complete freedom of belief will exist only when industrial life has become preëminent, and has displaced the military régime.

In a cursory review of this admirable book there is one topic which peculiarly meets the anxiety of the hour, and of which I would speak at somewhat greater length. Mr. Spencer gives us a brief sketch of the gradual progress and emancipation of woman since Fulc the Black amused himself burning his wife—unmolested, and, in fact, all German rulers bought their wives, and might sell or slay them at their good pleasure. In those happy days English brides were purchased and haggled over, their own desires counting for nothing in the bargaining.

He points out—with some felicity in sustaining his own opinions expressed later—that it was only in those tribes where women shared in the dangers of war that they gained some degree of liberty. In other words, brute force was the law of gained freedom. Mr. Spencer realizes the infinitely delicate handling needed to compare in detail the capacities of men and of women. He accepts the unquestionable fact that, whatever the fiat of averages may be, there are some women physically and mentally stronger than some men, healthier, more vigorous, endowed with a larger and richer intelligence. Generosity aside, he avers that justice demands that women, if they are not artificially advantaged, shall not, at any rate, be artificially disadvantaged. Hence, if men and women are to be regarded as independent beings, each one of whom is to do the best he or she can for himself or herself,

no restraint should be placed upon women in regard to whatever career or profession they choose to adopt.

So far so good ; but—in the last page—Mr. Spencer goes on to point out what he seems to consider the emphatic disability of women. He asks us if the political rights of women are the same as those of men,—realizing that the assumption is now widely made,—and if their only duty of citizenship is to consist in the casting of a vote. How shall one portion of a community, he argues, assume the rights of government without incurring any of its risks ? Men have to man war vessels, to shoulder the musket in times when the public peace is threatened. Are women not only ready to do so—are they able ? He concludes with the statement that, if they are not, it is useless to prate of their political rights, unless, indeed, we lived in a state of permanent peace. Here then in a nut-shell lies the gist of the whole matter, the opinion of the greatest of living philosophers. Women are unqualified for governing because they are unqualified for fighting.

It may here be said that it seems, indeed, a pity that women should be so unqualified. Women are by nature quicker to resent injury than men, more fiery, more easily roused to indignation at the sight of wrong, more combative. The last word is proverbially the feminine one. Then, they are more dramatic than men, and therefore more prone to be thrilled and stirred by the heroic. They are courageous, and they are cheerful under physical pain. No one will deny that in their narrow sphere—and why not, then, in a wider one ?—they are diplomatists, strategists, and tacticians ; eminently, therefore, fitted for the subtleties of the art of war. One cannot doubt that morally they would make excellent soldiers. As to endurance ! only watch the evolutions of the maiden *à la mode*, at one of our great watering-places ; the veriest unbeliever would be persuaded, nay, converted. She will be up with the lark, swim all the morning, attend a “girls’ luncheon” at noon, be in the saddle all the afternoon, dine at eight, and dance till three, and this for a period of six months of summer heat ; and she will not look much the worse for the régime !

Octave Feuillet, in one of his recent novels, paints with his poignant and piquant satire the fatigue of the enervated and dyspeptic man of the world who tries to emulate and follow a Parisian great lady in her exhausting and exhaustless round of

pleasure ; pleasure which necessitates unflagging physical prowess, as well as the alertness of a keen and wide-awake *esprit*.

But here come the doctors and the men of science to dispel and refute all the illusions of superficial observers. The late Dr. Clark, of Boston, contends that for physiological reasons, associated with woman's function of maternity, she is unfit for that military service which, in the last resort, is the supreme duty of every citizen.

The other day a distinguished German anatomist declared that, from a careful study of the conformation of a woman's knee, he has arrived at the conclusion that it is not constructed for the maintenance of an upright posture, or of movement under heavy weights for any protracted period. Women, therefore, are barred out, in his opinion, from those forced and fatiguing marches which form an essential feature of every campaign.

It is a curious fact that Mr. Spencer was formerly an advocate of female emancipation. He now declares himself against it. The Liberals were, until lately, the hope and trust of the female suffragists. They, indeed, were once on the verge of passing a resolution on the question through the House of Commons. Recently, however, they appear to have grown tired of the women, and the Conservatives have taken them up. These have passed a resolution at Birmingham in favor of female suffrage. When Mrs. Fawcett—the widow of the blind Postmaster-General, and mother of the Miss Fawcett who beat the senior wrangler in mathematics at Cambridge—addressed the convocation, she said that the Gladstonians feared that the women would reënforce the party of order and the upholders of the indissoluble union between Great Britain and Ireland.

It is odd that Spencer should desert the female emancipators just as the "Primrose dames" have rendered such solid service to the Tory leaders as to convince a large portion of them that the ballot ought to be granted to them.

That women cannot go to war seems a poor and idle plea for refusing them a voice in public affairs. Men who have passed the age of military duty are permitted to vote, and since the days of Homer particular respect has been given to their decisions. It is only in countries where the conscription prevails that weight would be attached to women's inability for militant services. In England and the United States armies are formed by voluntary

recruitment. In the last century the recruiting system was almost universal. All countries would probably revert to it if women voted. Who shall say that the reversion would not be a good thing for civilization ?

JULIEN GORDON.

DR. HAMMOND :

I AM not quite sure that the book I am about to mention as the best published during the year is strictly inside the limits laid down by the editor of *THE REVIEW* within which a choice is to be made, but with free scope embracing the entire literature of the world during the year 1891, and excluding technical works, there is no doubt in my mind that the "Century Dictionary" stands preëminent. If it were an ordinary dictionary, or even merely the best of the class hitherto published, it would certainly not be entitled to this exalted position ; but it is such a great advance upon everything of the kind yet given to the world, and so different from all else in its extent and detail, and embraces so much of science, literature, art, philosophy, and, in fact, every kind of knowledge, that its influence upon mankind must necessarily be of the most direct and powerful character. If it were a mere compilation, however excellent it might be, this praise would not be justified ; but it is full of originality from beginning to end, and is so comprehensive and far-reaching that one cannot turn over its pages without being almost appalled at the magnitude of the work, and astonished at the thoroughness and exactness with which it has been accomplished.

Of course any well-educated and intelligent person with a competent corps of assistants can make an encyclopædia or dictionary. There are a great many remarkable examples of the truth of this assertion ; none more to the point than the wonderful "Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX^{ème} Siècle" of Pierre Larousse, certainly the greatest work of the kind which the mind of man has ever conceived or executed. But this is not only a dictionary ; it is an encyclopædia of history, geography, literature, science, art, and, in truth, every branch of human knowledge. It is a library in itself. Its cost, however, to say nothing of its bulk, is so extreme as to place it entirely beyond the reach of the majority of those who might need to consult its pages.

But the "Century Dictionary" is essentially a dictionary, and

not an encyclopædia, although it has several encyclopædic features. Its first object is to treat of words, and the fact that 7,000 pages are required for this purpose is due, not so much to the extent of the information in regard to persons, places, and things, as it is to the number of words and the amplitude of its definitions, its etymologies, and the citations of authorities illustrative of usage and meaning. In the matter of derivatives and compound words, no dictionary that I have ever seen can make any pretence to approaching it. Take, for instance, the word "powder." I have found under this head reference to every kind of substance to which the word powder is ordinarily applied, even to those which are used in medicine. I have discovered only one notable omission, and that is "succession powder," the substance used during the latter part of the middle ages, especially in Italy, by expectant heirs to get rid of those who stood in the way of their inheritance. But then I do not find "succession powder" in any other dictionary, which is somewhat strange, for various other powders of analagous classes, such as the "powder of sympathy," for instance, are given by these others, and with great fulness by the "Century."

With the extension of education into all classes of life, words which a few years ago were regarded as being peculiar to science have now become commonplace, and a dictionary with pretensions to general usefulness must bring them within its scope.

In dictionaries hitherto published there seems to have been no rule governing the principle of acceptance, but merely a notion based upon the idea that this or that word was not of sufficient importance as an integral part of the language to warrant its being incorporated with others in regard to which no doubt existed. Thus, all dictionaries gave the word "opium," but none except those pertaining to medicine or botany contained "apiol," which word is fully defined in the "Century." "Stramonium," a word indicating a substance certainly of no greater importance than "physostigma," has been recognized for several years by all the prominent dictionaries; but this last-named receives no notice, while the "Century" devotes several lines to its consideration, giving its pronounciation and etymology, a description of the botanical characteristics of the genus of plants to which it refers, and an account sufficiently full for the general reader of the medicinal properties of the only species of the *physostigma venenosum*.

With all living languages there is danger that expressive words, better for some purposes than others of like meaning, and always useful in our efforts to avoid that mean fault, tautology, will die merely because there is not a sufficient number of writers to perceive their value and to employ them. It is as a preserver of such words that the "Century Dictionary" stands preëminent among all works of its kind. The reader of Chaucer, of Spencer, of Shakespeare, and of other writers to whom the English tongue owes so much of directness and force, requires a glossary in order to understand fully the meanings sought to be conveyed. Indeed, he needs one such help for Chaucer, another for Shakespeare, another for Piers Ploughman, another for the "Morte d'Arthure," and so on for a dozen or more others. A few examples will suffice to show that with the "Century Dictionary" the reader of early English literature requires no other aid for the elucidation of the text. Thus the word to *kemp* is not found in any of the dictionaries in common use, but the "Century" treats of it as follows :

Kemp (kemp), *v. i.* [A var. of *camp* (after *kemp*, *n.*) : see *camp*, *v.*] To strive or contend in any way ; strive for victory, as in the quantity of work done by reapers in the harvest-field. [Scotch and old Eng.]

There es no Kynge undire Criste may *kempe* with hym one !
He wille be Alexander ayre, that alle the erthe lowttede.
Morte Arthure [E. E. T. S.] I. 2634.

"Gurl" and its adjective, "gurly," are not given in either Webster or Worcester, but the "Century" cites them as follows :

Gurl (gerl), *v. i.* [ME. *gurlen*; a transposed form of *growl*, D. *grollen*, etc.: see *growl*.] To growl; grumble. [Prov. Eng.]

As a mete in a man that is not defied bifore, makith man bodi to *gurle* [var. *groule*].

Wyclif, Select Works (ed. Arnold), II. 249.

Gurly (ger'li), *a.* [Also *gurlie*; a transposed form of *growly*: see *gurl*.] Fierce; stormy.

The clouds grew dark, and the wind grew loud,
And the levin fill'd her ee;
And waesome wall'd the snaw-white sprites
Upon the *gurlie* sea.

The Daemon Lover (Child's Ballads, I. 204).

Iberius with a *gurly* nod,
Cried Hogan ! Yes, we ken your god.
'Tis herrings you adore.

Allan Ramsay, The Vision. (Mackay.)

In a book of old English nursery rhymes which was familiar to me in my childhood, and many of the poems of which I still call to mind, is the following :

“ To market ride the gentlemen;
 So do we, so do we.
 Then comes the country clown
 Hobbledy gee.
 First go the ladies mim, mim, mim,
 Next come the gentlemen, trim, trim, trim.
 Then comes the country clown
 Gallop a trot, trot, trot.”

Now, I have never had the slightest idea of the meaning of “mim,” and, on looking for the word in Webster, Worcester, Stormonth, and other dictionaries in my possession, have been unable to find it. Doubtless it occurs in some of the glossaries of old words, but I am quite sure that no considerable number of the readers of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW have any clear notion of what William Black means when he says in “Far Lochaber”: “Lightning-storms seem to come quite natural to you, for all as prim and *mim* as you are.”

But, turning to the “Century,” we find that *mim* is an adjective, “a minced form of *mum*, silent,” and that it means “primly silent; prim; demure; precise; affectedly modest; quiet; mute”; and that it is also used adverbially; and then a quotation from Burns and the one from Black just cited are given as examples of the use and signification of the word.

In these times, when writers, either from a disposition to rescue good words from oblivion and to bring them again into use, or from affectation of knowledge easily acquired, are searching for quaint and little-known modes of expression, a dictionary that does not contain a full assortment of the words used at the present day, as well as of those that have fallen by the wayside, is deficient in one of the most essential qualities of a lexicon. The “Century” does this, and a great deal more. If I were writing a review, I should be tempted to consider at some length several of these excellences. But I am only telling what I consider the best book of the year, and I must close with a reference to one single additional point; and that is that the “Century” rectifies many errors which have been transmitted from dictionary to dictionary, and which have thus been productive of a great deal of harm. For instance, take the word “coca.” Coca is

defined by Worcester as “the dried leaf of the *Erythroxylon Coca*, a native plant of Peru ; it is a very stimulating narcotic and more pernicious than opium.” By Webster coca is said to be “a highly stimulating narcotic, the dried leaf of the *Erythroxylon Coca*, a plant found wild in Peru.” By Stormonth coca is said to be “the dried leaf of a plant having highly narcotic quantities, used by the Peruvians.”

Now, coca is not a narcotic and never has been so regarded. Turning to the “Century,” we find it defined as “the dried leaf of the *Erythroxylon Coca*, natural order Linnaceæ, a small shrub of the mountains of Peru and Bolivia, but cultivated in other parts of South America.” Then, after a few lines of description, it is said to be “a stimulant, bearing some resemblance in its effects to tea and coffee, and has long been used as a masticatory by the Indians of South America. It relieves feelings of fatigue and hunger, and the difficulty in breathing experienced in climbing high mountains. The habit of chewing coca is an enslaving one. . . . It yields the valuable alkaloid cocaine.” And all this is correct.

The “Century” is excellent reading for one fond of learning, even in a mild form, while for the scholar, though it may contain little that is new, it will inevitably, by saving him trouble, take a place that a hundred other dictionaries, glossaries, and such like would be required to fill.

So far, therefore, as my limited information extends, and in accordance with the condition imposed by THE REVIEW of excluding strictly technical works, I regard the “Century Dictionary” as the “best book of the year.”

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